

Present

Bilal Ansari, Charles Bonenti, Van Ellet, Cheryl Shanks, Leigh Short, Catherine Yamamoto (chair); invited: Connie Kruger, consultant; Jennifer Goldson, consultant, present via speakerphone

Also present: Joan Burns, Suzanne Kemple, Brandon Romero, Dylan Stafford, Ken Swiatek, Tela Zasloff; Ed Damon (Transcript), Stephen Dravis (iBerkshires), Alex Elvin (Advocate), Martin Filion (Willinet)

Business

1. Minutes

The minutes of the September 17 meeting were approved 6-0-0. Van moved, Charles seconded. The minutes of the September 30 meeting were approved 5-0-1. Van moved, Charles seconded. The minutes of the October 2 meeting were approved 5-0-1. Van moved, Bilal seconded. The minutes of the October 10 meeting were amended to note that several Williams College students had attended that meeting hoping to present design ideas for the Photech site, and had participated in the meeting. Minutes as amended were approved 4-0-2. Charles moved, Cheryl seconded.

2. Updates on sites

A. Photech contamination

Leigh Short reported the status of the Photech bank contamination assessment. Data is not back on the silver contamination ("hot spot") in the bank. Once it is, an ecorisk assessment will be done for Tighe & Bond, which will then write a risk report. The state will review that report before deciding what sort of deed restriction will be put on the property. Leigh expects the state to impose a deed restriction on the Photech property restricting construction to uses that least disturb the soil. When the state will convey that decision is unknown, but is unlikely to be before December.

B. Cable Mills: Cathy reports that David Traggorth of Mitchell Properties recently reported to the CPC that MP is hopeful that funding will be in place this fall and they will break ground in April.

C. Higher Ground/College site: Cathy reports that the development team intends to fast-track this development in hopes that it will be ready for occupancy in late 2015 or early 2016.

3. Presentation of Listening Sessions results by Connie Kruger, with Jennifer Goldson on speakerphone. The consultants went over printed reports that are available in town hall as an addendum to these minutes.

A. Results from 59 Water St session held on September 30

1. Unique characteristics of site: used for parking, and walking or biking through to Spring St from Water St.
2. Advantages/disadvantages to developing this site focused on traffic, as a pro (commercial activity and street life) and a con (nuisance).
3. Preferred look and use several years down the road: mixed use (commercial, college, medical, or municipal), blend in with neighborhood architecture, front porches, 3 or more stories, sloped roofs with dormers, high density, outdoor community space, gardens. Anti-boxy.

B. Results from Photech session.

1. Unique characteristics of site: river access, part of a current residential community, part of historic district, gatehouse.
2. Advantages/disadvantages of developing this site focused on brownfields remediation as a plus (clean and usable) and a minus (cost)
3. Preferred look and use several years down the road: townhouses or cottages, sloped roofs, 2 1/2 stories high, dormers. Cathy Yamamoto summed up that the responses seemed to describe a park with housing.

C. Issues

1. 59 Water

- a. Mixed use development raises questions about town planning and the market for commercial development, which is not information we specifically solicited.

Leigh will ask the Chamber of Commerce and Van will ask the Planning Board if they have an interest in either promoting or discouraging such development. This will inform us about whether to leave the RFP(s) open to the possibility of commercial development.

- b. Cable Mills will likely be developed before 59 Water, which will affect the way each goes forward.

1. Competition. We see no funding or tenancy competition because of the difference in timing and the depth of housing need, but this issue needs to be paid attention to.

2. Complementarity. We believe that beautification of the Water St corridor will make each development more attractive, that the two will be quite different architecturally (one old, one new), and that affordability being set at different levels (80%

AMI for Cable Mills and (we hope) lower for 59 Water) will prevent the two interfering with each other.

c. Ken Swiatek suggested that ground-floor units could be built to accommodate either commercial or residential use.

d. Kevin Kennefick suggested that the new residents of Cable Mills and of 59 Water St could support existing and new commercial activity on Water St.

2. Photech

a. Kevin Kennefick noted that there might be pressure to concentrate housing on one part of the site because of the wetlands and the flood plain, but it was important that building be low enough that the view be retained because that was a benefit that the neighborhood, the town's densest, currently depended on.

b. Cathy Yamamoto observed that since view was central to arguments about Lowry and Burbank, it should be taken seriously at Photech as well.

c. Joan Burns noted that one plan (by Ann McCallum) included a substantial amount of fill to lift the southern area of the site over the flood plain, and that if this were done, it would delay construction because fill needs a substantial time to settle before it can be built on.

3. General: Suzanne Kemple advocated doing a financial feasibility and funding study since Cable Mills and the Higher Ground sites' simultaneous development might make development at 59 Water St and Photech commercially unattractive. If that did happen then people might draw the conclusion that the sites were undevelopable.

a. Connie Kruger responded that the committee had chosen to send out the RFP to contractors, who would do their own analysis anyway and respond if it was financially feasible, obviating the need for the committee/consultants, who are not experts at this, to do this work.

b. Bilal Ansari said that he believed that these comments reflected and perhaps promoted fear.

c. Cathy Yamamoto said that if the RFPs fail then we will learn something.

4. 30(B) Procedures

Connie Kruger went over necessary steps in complying with the state's public procurement law.

5. Work for committee

A. At its next meeting, the committee needs to discuss

1. Whether we should send out one RFP (for 59 Water) or two (for 59 Water and Photech), given the timing of the Photech remediation report.
2. Whether we should alter the timeline for RFP responses, evaluation and development
3. What criteria we consider mandatory and what we consider preferable.

B. During the meeting, Leigh and Van took on consultations with the Chamber of Commerce and Planning Board.

C. Committee members will report (supply to the secretary, Cheryl Shanks) information about the affordable housing currently in town.

1. Church Corners: Charles
2. Family housing (Spring Meadow and Stetson Court): Cathy
3. Meadowvale: Van
4. Proprietors Fields: Bilal

Documents consulted: Summary of 59 Water St Listening Session, Summary of Photech Listening Session, 30(B) Procedures, Timeline, RFP Criteria List (all from the consultants)

Next meeting: October 31, 4:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Shanks, secretary